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Letter dated 22 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, issued on 22 March 2004 by the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Ryan**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 22 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin issued on 22 March 2004 by the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union

The General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting today under President Mr. Brian Cowen T.D. Irish Foreign Minister have agreed the following on the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin:

The Council condemned the extrajudicial killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and seven other Palestinians by Israeli forces this morning. The European Union has consistently opposed extrajudicial killings. Not only are extrajudicial killings contrary to international law, they undermine the concept of the rule of law which is a key element in the fight against terrorism.

The European Union has repeatedly condemned the terrorist atrocities committed by Hamas which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Israelis. The European Union recognizes Israel's right to protect its citizens against terrorist attacks. Israel is entitled to do this under international law. Israel is not, however, entitled to carry out extrajudicial killings. Furthermore, the assassination which has just been carried out has inflamed the situation. The Council called on all sides to exercise restraint and to refrain form acts of violence, which will only lead to more deaths and will put a peaceful settlement still further from reach.

Violence is no substitute for the political negotiations which are necessary for a just and lasting settlement. The Quartet road map remains the basis for reaching such a settlement.